



March 12, 2008

GENERAL ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Senator Gayle Slossberg, Co-Chair

Representative Christopher Caruso, Co-Chair

Room 2200, Legislative Office Building

Hartford, CT 06106

Re: **Public Hearing on SB 673: "AN ACT CONCERNING IMPROVED
TELECOMMUTING PROGRAMS FOR THE STATE'S WORKFORCE"**

Senator Slossberg and Representative Caruso:

My name is Sandra Brunelli, and I have worked as an Environmental Analyst for the State of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the last 15 years. I live in Southington, so I drive one of the many thousands of cars on the highway making the 45 mile round trip commute into Hartford every day.

I am testifying today in **favor** of Senate Bill 673, "An Act Concerning Improved Telecommuting Programs for the State's Workforce."

I am a union steward in CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, and my fellow members and I have advocated for improved telecommuting options within the DEP and other state agencies for years. The State of Connecticut currently has a telecommuting policy for its employees, but only a tiny fraction – around 200 of the nearly 50,000 State employees – are allowed to participate in it.

Imagine if we could get a quarter or even a fifth of our State workforce off the road. That would potentially be 10,000 fewer vehicles on our congested roads and highways.

Our union members and I have had discussions with management at the DEP on this issue, yet it has frequently been stuck in a Department of Administrative Services (DAS) bureaucratic bottleneck. That is why, even with a policy on the books, we feel it is necessary to pass this bill to encourage state agencies to take this initiative seriously.

In general I have a desk job. I read reports, interpret data, and conduct work on the computer. I can just as easily perform these tasks at home one or two days a week while still receiving adequate supervision, support, and access to colleagues, allowing me to perform my job satisfactorily.

Because my computer and desk are at DEP's headquarters in Hartford, I often spend an hour and a half driving to and from work every day.

I also have many colleagues who work predominately in the field, and they live all over the state. It is not unusual for a co-worker who lives in southern Connecticut to drive up to Hartford to pick up a State vehicle, and then drive back to southern Connecticut to conduct their job duties. They then drive back to

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Hartford to drop off the car, get in their personal vehicle, and drive back to their home in southern Connecticut.

Imagine if field staff could go directly to their job site from their home, conduct their work, and then return directly home to complete necessary reports for the rest of their workday. This would save time and gas, as well as increase productivity over the "home to Hartford, Hartford to field, back to Hartford, and back home" scenario.

Other agencies where we represent state workers would benefit from telecommuting, as well. For example, many Department of Developmental Services (DDS) employees could provide services in the field to families more efficiently by working out of their homes one or two days a week. The Department of Information Technology (DOIT) is already ahead of the game because their workers currently have the equipment to facilitate working from home.

This bill would establish a pilot program for three agencies, including DEP, which should be encouraged to implement functional telecommuting options because:

- 1). **It conforms to the mission of the DEP;**
- 2). **Much of our work can be performed from home; and**
- 3). **Taking cars off the road at peak commuting times lowers pollution and decreases demand on our over-taxed transportation system.**

Studies have shown that employees that telecommute are more productive and report higher job satisfaction. Telecommuting programs help attract and retain quality employees. The Department of Transportation (DOT) obviously thinks telecommuting is a good idea because it has a program to encourage Connecticut's private employers to consider it for their employees, yet the vast majority of State employees are unable to take advantage of this option.

My fellow union members and I believe that telecommuting should be a viable option for all State employees whose duties would allow it. Private company employees telecommute; federal government employees telecommute; and the State of Connecticut should be doing it too, and leading by example.

To quote Governor M. Jodi Rell from her "One Thing" web site:

"When it comes to rising energy costs and preserving the environment, there is no longer a debate about whether something needs to be done."

This is one small thing we can do to make a big impact on improving our state's environment and conserving our natural resources. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my beliefs and values on this subject with your committee.

Sandra Brunelli

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cc: Members, Connecticut General Assembly GAE Committee
Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Gina McCarthy